

**County of San Diego General Plan Update**

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*JACUMBA SUBREGIONAL  
GROUP AREA*

*MOUNTAIN EMPIRE SUBREGIONAL  
PLAN*

**October 2010**

# Vision Statement for Jacumba

Jacumba is a diverse community. The ratio of young to older citizens is about even, which makes the vision diverse as well. We want schools for the young, also much needed services like fire protection, police and medical care, and still not lose the wonderful feeling that is Jacumba. Clean air, beautiful scenery, superb climate and no congestion or traffic.

The community supports new development that is compatible with, and preserves the natural and historical environment, including water resources, and protects existing neighborhoods, manages growth to reinforce the rural small town character of the area that includes agriculture, open space, and trails as important elements of the community.

The community supports the provision of adequate public services by new development without compromising existing levels of service or burdening existing residents with the costs of growth.

We hope someday to become the jewel of the backcountry.

# Background Information

## A. History

The town is in a valley in the Jacumba Mountains at an altitude of 2,800 feet above sea level. The area is dry with an annual average rainfall of 11.8 inches. It is served by Old Highway 80; Interstate 8 bypasses the town at a distance of two miles.

Jacumba is located on the US-Mexico border. A small settlement exists on the Mexican side, known as Jacume; the unmanned crossing was closed in 1995. The new enlarged border fence now runs through the area. The United States Border Patrol maintains an increased presence in the area to curtail smuggling and illegal immigration.

People have been drawn to Jacumba due to its temperate climate, beautiful setting and the healing properties of its natural mineral hot springs. Its name is thought to mean magic springs in the language of the native Kumeyaay Indians.

The Kumeyaay peoples occupied Jacumba and surrounding areas prior to European incursion. They were probably attracted by the warm Jacumba hot springs, one of the many mineral hot springs which occur up and down the peninsular ranges of California.

Ranchers occupied the area in the 19th century and were often in conflict with the Indians. Many were slain by ranchers for cattle rustling in the 1870 Jacumba Massacre.

Around the turn of the century, the health and relaxation benefits of natural hot springs began to be commercialized. The Jacumba Hot Spring is prolific and delivered enough water to large public baths, the remains of which can still be seen. The water contains sulfur but has a pleasant clean smell. In 1919 rail service connected Jacumba to San Diego. By 1925, the town had a world class hotel, The Hotel Jacumba. In the 1930s, Jacumba had developed into a top destination and had a population of more than 5,000. Many of the foremost movie stars and celebrities of the time regarded Jacumba as a prime destination for relaxation.

Jacumba's role as a prime destination continued through World War II; however as the southernmost California hot spring, it began to feel competition from more northern ones, including Murrieta and Palm Springs. After the new Interstate 8 bypassed Jacumba by two miles, most of the roadside service businesses folded and the community went into economic decline.

The Jacumba Hotel closed and was destroyed in an arson fire in 1985. The ruins stood until 1991. Today, the stub of the massive central fireplace can still be seen. The great public baths closed, the swimming pool was filled in, and the well was capped by its rights-owner.

In the 1980s the Jacumba Motel was the only hotel facility left in Jacumba. However, the area continues to attract visitors and the motel has acquired rights to the spring and opened a spa.

County planning documents have long incorporated plans for the revitalization and growth of the Jacumba area. Adopted county plans envision future development of the Ketchum Ranch and call for Jacumba to once again become a thriving country town.

Jacumba also has the only County of San Diego airport in the Mountain Empire Subregion.